6: Mousset H-4 (no date) 1950 E16 Slavic Peoples E16

Congresses and Assemblies of the time, void of ideas, and absurd'.[1]

The poet and precursor of the Russian Slavophile current had been the Muscovite, Alexis Khomyakov, who was born in 1804, and died of cholera in 1860. Although a man of very wide and varied general culture (he invented a gun, and a new type of shell), he was deeply attached to national and religious traditions. Moving in literary and philosophical circles, which looked to the West for their standards, he felt a frenzied need for reaction. To the cosmopolitanism of ideas and to the philosophy of Schelling, with whom his contemporaries were infatuated, he opposed a new system, based on the obligation, for any nation wishing to attain its full development, to preserve its original atmosphere of faith, manners, and traditions. Thus, while the Czechs, the Croats, the Slovenes, had at first perceived in Slavism an instrument of joint solidarity and of liberation, Russia began by regarding it as a rampart against the intrusion of Western thought.

The fundamental idea of the so-called Slavophile school was this: the West was in full decay; it was up to Russia to keep herself free of all contaminations, in order to play the regenerating role assigned to her by Providence. In the history of the universe, it was the destiny of each nation to realise one aspect of human genius and to carry this realisation to its point of perfection. Ancient Greece expressed plastic beauty, Rome's mission was to realise the conception of the State, and of Law. The Christian peoples of Western Europe had developed Rationalism and its applications to actual life by giving special prominence to individualist doctrines; witness Luther's doctrine, English political Liberalism, French equalitarianism.

The late-comers in history, Russia and the other Slavonic peoples, still had a decisive role to play in the evolution of humanity—to define the social value of love and brotherhood. The Slavonic race would find, in its mentality and institutions, the necessary conditions for fulfilling this mission. All it had to do was to foster and develop its original characteristics.

That was the psychological and providential aspect of the Slavophile thesis, in which we find unconscious reminiscences of

[1] *Confession*, p. 105 *sqq.*

6: Mousset H-4 (no date) 1950 E16 Slavic Peoples E16

helplessness; Benes capitulated before Gottwald's ultimatum. It was the end of the Putsch which Hubert Ripka later described as a 'prefabricated revolution'. On March 9[1] Jean Masaryk, Minister of Foreign Affairs, wrote a personal letter to Stalin, in which he denounced the intervention of Zorine, the Soviet Ambassador, in the events of February: 'When a time of mortal danger for the country, and for all Slavs, comes, you will have in Prague nothing but a Government hated by the country, despised by the *élite*, and relying entirely on the bayonets of its police organisations'. The next day Masaryk committed suicide: contradictory versions of his death were circulated, although the above-mentioned letter had made clear his intention of ending his life.

Thus the inspirer of two Czech liberations, heir to the thought of Thomas Masaryk, disappeared in shameful oblivion; the commentaries in the Communist press, in which he was later accused of having betrayed the interests of the country, lead us to wonder whether his inglorious end did not save him from an even more tragic fate. Posterity will pronounce a mixed judgment on his political achievement. His tomb might fittingly have been engraved with this epitaph, taken from one of his books (*Whither the Slavs?*): 'The existence and the prosperity of all the Slav States is inseparably bound up with a régime of true democracy, that is to say, a régime in which the elementary principles of individual liberty, liberty of conviction, liberty of religion, liberty of political expression and liberty of public opinion, are guaranteed and fully respected'.

As for Benes, whose authority was henceforth without scope, on June 7, 'for health reasons', he resigned his presidential office, which he had held since June 19, 1946, in a message by which he invited his fellow-citizens 'to encourage liberty and consciously enjoy it'. He died a few months later, on September 3, 1948.

The events of February were to be mentioned at the United Nations Security Council, with a view to appointing a commission of inquiry—which was opposed by a Soviet veto (May 24).

On March 9, 1948, was voted the Constitution which made Czechoslovakia a 'democratic peoples' republic'. It instituted a Single House system, and proclaimed the equality of Czechs and Slovaks: the republic was to be a bi-national State. Unlike

1 [1948 - Analyst]

7; Lednicki S-4 (no date) 1948 E16 Slavic Peoples E16

186* 829 Quite different was the development of the Eastern civilization. Orthodoxy preserved the purity of Christian faith and teaching, which is established and confirmed by ecumenic councils. The Orthodox theology is the true Christian theology because it is based not on reason but on the revelation of the superior truth. The Russian state originated not by violence and conquest but by a voluntary invitation of the rulers by the people. Russia did not know feudalism, the Russian land never belonged to a feudal aristocracy but to the community, and the Russian people never knew inequality. The tsar was bound to the people by a union of love, and the *Veche* (Popular Assembly) expressed the will of the people. Providentialism and national exclusiveness were at the base of this doctrine.

It would be impossible within the frames of this article to enter into all details of this system, but what was particularly characteristic in the teachings of Khomyakov and the Aksakovs was their conception of freedom which needed no guarantees. They considered treaties, contracts, agreements—in other words any legally established guarantee—evil. In their opinion the Russian people were repelled by juridical norms, and the Russian laws represented an inner truth. They did not care for any external usefulness or formalism. "All classes and groups of the population are penetrated by one spirit, by one faith, by the same opinions, by similar ideas, and by the same need or desire for common happiness." (Constantine Aksakov). Another trait was the complete reduction of the role of the individual which appears in their conception of the Russian land community. The agricultural character of the Russian civilization brought the Russian people to an humble subordination, which, by the way, the Slavophils praised enormously. That choral, primitive, and purely Christian character of the old Russian civilization was what they wanted to preserve. Connected with this was the argument of Russian simplicity. The same Constantine Aksakov stresses the fact that neither did Russian history have any theatrical episode nor did the Russian people like beautiful poses. "Nothing dis-

● [156]